
Success Story- U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA)

Business Matchmaking Leads to Entrepreneurial Success

JACKSONVILLE, Fla.- Andy Harold tells his entrepreneurial story today, and will continue to tell the story for years to come; his future is incredibly bright and the growth is just beginning. Mr. Harold grew up in Virginia Beach and attended Oberlin College, receiving his B.A. in Piano Performance. He later attended flight school in the U.S. Navy; specializing in helicopters. Mr. Harold worked at Mayport Naval Air Station from 1994 to 1997 before being transferred to London with the Navy. This introduction to Jacksonville was all it took to bring him back to the beautiful city while he was in the reserves to start work. In 2001, Mr. Harold began working for D.P. and Associates providing multimedia training for helicopters under Department of Defense Contracts.

In 2003, As the Defense contract was running out of time, Mr. Harold started his own small business on the side, A. Harold and Associates. Mr. Harold's new business obtained its very first contract during the Jacksonville Super Bowl in 2005. Mr. Harold's first large contract was a result of the 2006 Business Matchmaking event hosted by the SBA in Jacksonville. Mr. Harold met with the Senior Contracts Manager of ARINC at this event and followed up with the contact regularly. From his persistence, ARINC called Mr. Harold asking if A. Harold and Associates would be interested in bidding for a contract for electromagnetic environmental engineering. Mr. Harold took on the contract with much success and signed a following contract with the City of Jacksonville to provide training. In the meantime, D.P. and Associates was purchased by a larger company and Mr. Harold was able to resign and sign back on as a subcontractor; also allowing him to submit an application to the SBA's 8(a) Business Development Program.

With a great deal of help from the SBA, the Small Business Development Center at UNF, the Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) and others, Mr. Harold was accepted into the SBA's 8(a) Program in August of 2007; which opened a whole new avenue of contracts for A. Harold and Associates. Due to the growth of his business, Mr. Harold applied and was accepted for office space at the Beaver Street Enterprise Center; a small business incubator offering office space and small business support services in downtown Jacksonville. Immediately, Mr. Harold hired 24 additional people in 60 days to perform work on the contracts he was obtaining. A. Harold and Associates is positioned to handle any number of contracts at one time across the United States. At the time of the interview with Mr. Harold, he was successfully handling 5 government contracts from Albuquerque to Washington DC to Orlando to Maryland. One lesson Mr. Harold has learned from the SBA is that it can be dangerous to grow too fast. The goal of A. Harold and Associates is to manage this growth with superior customer service, quality products and services, and prepare to successfully exit the SBA's 8(A) program.

Mr. Harold balances his work life and his personal life with a wife and three children aged two to eleven. He is thankful for the opportunities provided to him and for the assistance of the SBA and the SBA's resource partners to making his entrepreneurial dream a reality. Mr. Harold states, "The support of the SBA has been very helpful in working and understanding the system. A small business owner needs checks and balances to make sure your not grow too fast."

A. Harold and Associates, LLC is a Florida-based, Service Disabled Veteran-Owned (SDVOB), 8(a)/Small Disadvantaged Business certified firm which provides technology, education, engineering, training and management services for both public and private sectors throughout the United States and abroad. Mr. Harold may be contacted at (904) 535-2290 or aharold@aha-llc.com or by visiting their website: <http://www.aha-llc.com>.

SBA has helped thousands of aspiring entrepreneurs over the years to gain a foothold in government contracting through the 8(a) Business Development Program. Participation is divided into two phases over nine years: a four-year developmental stage and a five-year transition stage. For more information on the 8(a) program, please visit <http://www.sba.gov/businessop/programs/8a.html> or contact the SBA North Florida District office at (904) 443-1900.

For more information on the SBA's Programs and Services, please visit www.sba.gov/fl/north.